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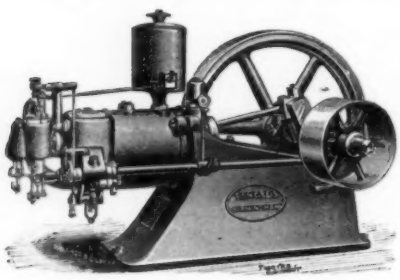

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THE twelfth ordinary general meeting of James Nelson and Sons, Limited, was held on Thursday at Winchester House, Old Broad-street, Mr. William Nelson, J.P. (the chairman of the company), presiding.

The Secretary (Mr. Philip Holmes, F.C.I.S.) read the notice calling the meeting and the auditors' report.

The Chairman (who was received with applause) said: Ladies and gentlemen,—I take the earliest opportunity of thanking you very much for your kindly reception. I know that it is a mark of appreciation of the efforts which have been put forward by the board and not only by myself. I suppose we may take the report and accounts as read, and proceed with the business. (Hear, hear.) The report and accounts having been taken as read, it now becomes my duty to move that they be received and adopted. Turning first to the assets of the company, which is a very cardinal point, you will observe that a considerable amount of capital outlay has been incurred during the year. An amount of £21,000 of that capital outlay has been on our home business, and for it we have extensions of refrigerating stores, which have cost about £11,000, and we have new retail establishments at a cost of some £10,000, both of which are returning to the company a large profit upon the outlay, and neither of which could your directors see their way to do without. (Applause.) I wish to state to you again, as we have stated before, that the board rely very much for the company's profits, and not alone for the profits, but for the ultimate and continued success of this company upon the retail portion of the business. (Applause.) During the year under review a very considerable number of new shops have been opened. Of course, a great amount of care is necessary, and I hope is exercised, in selecting the positions of these new shops, otherwise the shop business would result in failure instead of success.

We have really very little book-keeping; it is practically a cash business; we cater for the people and not for the classes, and I may tell you that our turnover is something like £2,000,000 of money in a year, which you will consider an extraordinary amount to turn over for meat, &c. Out of that amount you will see that there is only owing some £29,000, and that our bad debts on the year have only amounted to £758. (Applause.) Continuing my reference to the capital outlay of the year, you will see that at our works at Las Palmas, in South America, there has been a large outlay, amounting to £106,757. This really means doubling the business. We did not do this until we were assured that we required to do it and until we had an outlet here for the meat, and as this meat comes along so your shop system will be increased. (Applause.) Thus we will be ready to receive it here, and all the time I hope we shall be able to a very great extent to keep ourselves independent of the violent fluctuations that very often take place in the wholesale trade. (Applause.) Although we have had the uncomfortable experience of being burnt out there, and practically had the new portion of our factory burnt down some six months ago, fortunately for us the old portion was saved by our men working loyally and taking very great risks. I believe that by May 15 we shall have the new portion of the factory completed, which I think you will consider is rather smart work. At the same time, that will be without any extra cost to this company, as the insurance money that has been collected will fully cover the cost of the new buildings. There is no need for me to dilate upon the handsome bank balance, and I trust you will be satisfied with it. Then we come to an item in the balance-sheet that I think requires a few remarks, and that is, that the stock, taken on December 31, is taken at the actual cost, and has since been realised at a very handsome profit. (Applause.) Turning now to the profit and loss account, it is not necessary for me to say what a pleasure it is for the directors of this company to come before you, showing such a handsome result. (Applause.) It has been stated that there has been a good deal of luck; well, there may have been luck, but there has been a good deal of work in it at the same time. (Applause.)

I think that a good deal of the results of last year's trading are probably due to the very excellent steamship service given by the Nelson Steamship Line. It may be somewhat like sounding one's own horn, but we had a regularity that we were glad to take advantage of. I mean to say that the vessels are sailing fortnightly out of Liverpool, and it was rather a surprise at the end of the year when the managers came and told me that they had kept every single date. The result is that you can count on your cargoes coming in with regularity; you can deal with them more economically; you know when you will get them, and it is better to have that than to have an intermittent service, such as we have often had before. (Applause.) I will now move "That the report and accounts be received and adopted." (Applause.)

Mr. George Harris seconded the resolution, which was carried unanimously.

The Chairman then moved the payment of a 7 per cent. dividend on the first preference shares for the year, the payment of 47 per cent. dividend on the second preference shares for the year, and the payment of 50 per cent. on the ordinary shares for the year, less interim dividends already paid.

Mr. Robert Cooper seconded the resolution, which was put and carried nem. con.

The Chairman next proposed a vote of £5,000 by way of bonus to the leading members of the staff, and the payment of an annuity of £250 a year to the widow and family of the late manager. Mr. Heslop had worked assiduously for the benefit of the company, and especially in the establishment of the shops, and it was only right that something should be done for his widow and family.

Mr. Walter Blease seconded the resolution, which was unanimously agreed to.

Mr. Van Raalte thought that the shareholders should vote some substantial mark of recognition to the directors and Mr. Christopher Hope, of Buenos Ayres, for their services, and he therefore proposed that a sum of £2,000 should be voted them for their management of the company during the past year, and the motion was duly seconded and carried nem. con.

A vote of thanks to the chairman for presiding closed the proceedings.

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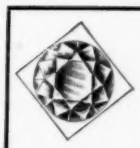

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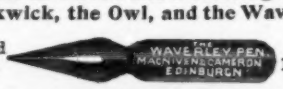

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